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THRIVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Cocreating a culture of care, for ourselves and the school community

Thriving Learning Environments
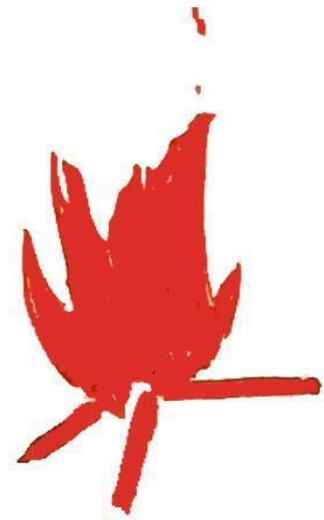## Cocreating a culture of care, for ourselves and the school community

CONTENT

Thriving Learning Environments
Cocreating a culture of care,
for ourselves and the school community

*"What kind of world do we
want to leave to our children
and grandchildren?"*
(Wahl, 2016, p.27)

1. Co-creating a thriving learning culture

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to help learning environments to create optimal conditions for integrating a whole school approach to sustainability, by starting with supporting ourselves and our community. While looking at the challenges schools face in the transition to a whole school approach, we see opportunities to nurture the colleague and school community in the way we hold, host and design our formal and informal gatherings and in the kind of conversations and reflections we engage in. By practicing relational skills in our internal and external meetings, a participatory school culture can be co-created in which all voices are heard. This in turn, creates a supportive environment for teachers who can take this further in their collaborations and classrooms.

First we look at the challenges of the whole school approach. Then we briefly watch through the relational perspectives of systemic pedagogy and the regenerative mindset, to then address the challenges one by one by suggesting questions to experience together with your community members. A thriving learning culture is hereby seen as a dynamic experiential continuous process of interaction and learning, as an emerging living ecosystem and not as a defined fixed end result.

1.2 Challenges of a whole school approach

*"How can we meet
everyone´s basic needs
and protect
thriving human cultures
and planetary wellbeing?"*
(Wahl, 2016, p.28)

UNESCO (2013) defines the Whole School Approach as follows: "*Involves addressing the needs of learners, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these.*"

The main challenges schools face when integrating a whole school approach to sustainability (Hargreaves, 2008) are summarized under the following chapters:
- Interconnectedness: an integrated, holistic and systemic approach is required

- What you teach and how you teach, addressing the needs: leadership and facilitation skills are needed to shift to participatory, learner-centered approaches
- Co-creating a common vision: teachers, pupils, school staff, stakeholders and parents creating a positive vision and following principles of sustainable development
- Knowledge sharing between schools & stakeholders
- Alignment with the history, identity and local context of the school

1.3 Systemic pedagogy and the regenerative mindset

Cocreating a participatory culture in which no one is left behind, is the field of systemic pedagogy. Systemic pedagogy sees a human being as an integral part of many relationships (family, school, community, ...) and therefore takes the child's context and culture into consideration, across generations. It aims to build a sense of safety and belonging through involving the parents and community in the learning process and by approaching the child as a whole being for which the mental, social, emotional and physical experiences are equally important.

The stories we tell are crucial in building a culture. Shifting to a sustainable climate is similar to telling a different story, a restorative story of interrelatedness. What is really at stake is a shift in seeing, thinking and being. The transition to a regenerative mindset surely doesn't happen overnight. It's the small habits that will change the school culture. What you tell yourself. Which stories you share. How you communicate. How you collaborate and how meaningfully you spend your time together.
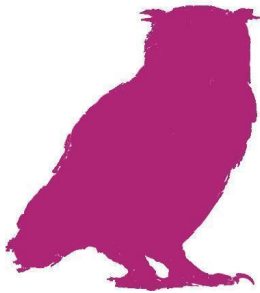
"Having a regenerative mindset means seeing the world as a living system, built around reciprocal and co-evolutionary relationships and wholes, where humans, other living beings and ecosystems rely on one another for health."
(Warden, 2021, p.7)
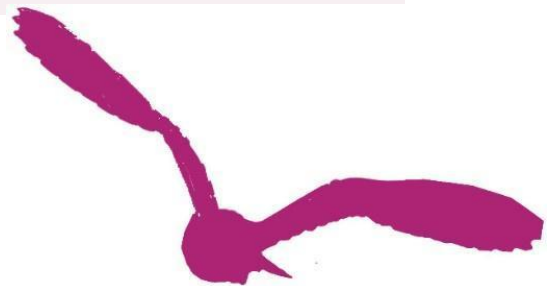
1.4 Practical approach

Let's have a look at the moments, outside of the teaching hours,
where the school climate can be nurtured, where we can start telling a different story.

School staff meetings	**How?**
Teacher meetings	Communication skills
Subject teacher meetings	Facilitation skills
Staff meetings	Decision making
	Participatory meetings
	Inviting multiple intelligences
	Interlinking the social, cultural, economic & ecological
School community	dimension
Parents meetings	

Pupil Council
School events
Projects with external organisations

Facilitating a safe emotional space for community building, celebration and reflection
Mapping and storying our connections with place, fauna and flora.

How can we make little adjustments to our gatherings that increase our interconnectedness, inform us about the needs in the community, help us to build a common vision, augment our learning capacity and align with the local identity of the school?

In the following chapters you find possible ways to turn the challenges previously mentioned (in 1.2) into opportunities for more well-being. There are no answers, only questions to reflect about together and to share our stories around. For the convenience a simple format is suggested here: Check In, Storytelling, Circle. These facilitation tools invite us to listen and reflect with an open mind and heart. Depending on the purpose of your meeting and of the seize of the groups, other tools may be more appropriate to facilitate the reflection processes (see 'Methods'). Also the questions can be adjusted to your situation.

Suggested facilitation tools:

- **Check In:** Starting a meeting with a Check In is always a good idea. A Check In usually begins with an open question. Every participant answers that question one by one, without being interrupted. We listen to everyone and only speak when it´s our turn. This helps to create safety, to align with the group and to get to know and understand each other. It also brings everyone´s attention to the objectives of the gathering and serves as a transition to open the meeting. With big groups the time spent on the Check In can be limited by adding 'Tell in one word, in one sentence,…' to the question. Examples of Check In questions are *What brings you here? How are you feeling today? What is your intention for this meeting? What do you love most about your work? What have you learned last week?*

- **Storytelling:** For Storytelling the question is the most important part. Examples of such questions are written out over the next chapters. Storytelling usually happens in little groups of 2-4 people. Before forming groups, the facilitator explains the roles of the storyteller and listener(s). It is a practice in listening and speaking from the heart. The storyteller tells in response to the question. The listener listens and does not interrupt, nor influence the storyteller with suggestions or questions. Then the roles are switched. After the story-round, there is a short reflection round to tell your companion how his/her story inspired you. To help the participants focus and get back on time, the facilitator offers a timeframe. Larger groups need more time.

- **Circle or Go-Round:** After the storytelling in little groups, all participants come back to the big circle. A circle or Go-Round serves to share, spread and collect the insights that came up during the previous exercise. Just like in the Check In, the participants can share reflections one by one, or pass the word on to the next.

Click for more information about the tools: Check In (Turner, 2012), Storytelling (Arthur, 2017), Go-Round (Rhizome.coop, s.d.). and The Circle Way (Baldwin & Linnea, 2016)

When integrating these questions in meetings, it is recommended that you start where the biggest needs in your school community are and where there is the least resistance. The order in this text is chosen solely for the sake of clarity and congruence with the attached curriculum. It is not intended as a checklist. Moreover, it is advisable not to rush into too many changes at once. Too much chaos prevents humans from feeling safe. Try one question at a time. See what emerges.

Document what happens. Practice, practice, practice. Reflect. Have patience. And remember: 'When it isn't fun, it isn't sustainable.'

> *"Creating regenerative systems is not simply a technical, economic, ecological or social shift: it has to go hand-in-hand with an underlying shift in the way we think about ourselves, our relationships with one another and life as a whole."* (Wahl, 2016)

2. Interconnectedness

People normally cut reality into compartments, and so are unable to see the interdependence of all phenomena. To see one in all and all in one is to break through the great barrier which narrows one´s perception of reality.
-Thich Nhat Hanh

An integrated win-win-win school approach highlights the interconnectedness between subjects. One way to connect the social, cultural, ecological and economic dimension is through **thematical education**. Here you find examples of addressing all dimensions in topic related classes. More about this teaching approach you find here.

The other holistic whole-school approach - the one that is addressed here – happens through **qualitative internal collaboration**. The concept refers to several interrelated aspects such as 'educating by being', 'increasing the interconnectedness with self, the school members, life', 'feeling heard and seen', 'transparent communication', 'meaningful collaborations', 'a sense of belonging' and 'thriving or regenerative cultures'. 'How can we be, think and act as interbeings?', that is the question.

2.1 Worldviews & Storytelling

We think we tell stories, but stories often tell us, tell us to love or hate, to see or be seen. Often, too often, stories saddle us, ride us, whip us onward, tell us what to do, and we do it without questioning. The task of learning to be free requires learning to hear them, to question them, to pause and hear silence, to name them, and then become a story-teller.
- Rebecca Solnit

> *"How can we enable connectivity?"*
> (Wahl, 2016, p.116)

In order to understand the change we are experiencing, we can look at the ideas and philosophies that have shaped our view of the world throughout history or we can compare our western scientific approach to spiritual and indigenous worldviews and learn from it (Gaia education, 2017-2018e). We can also describe our own worldviews and inspire each other. By telling our personal stories we build trust and connection, we share who we are and stimulate exploration and imagination. Collecting multiple perspectives enriches our lives, helps us to transcend binary thinking and increases our sense of belonging. When we answer with 'Yes, and …' we allow contrasting truths to co-exist, we affirm what someone said and add our own perspective. Now more than ever we need stories that connect us to the larger realities we are part of. An education that addresses the root causes of our climate crisis, is an education that tells the story of Earth as our common home. Instead of stories of competition, struggles and scarcity, let us start telling stories that connect us to the living universe and to the wisdom of life so we can story our lives with meaning, appreciation for life and rootedness in place.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4

Questions for story sharing:
Which worldviews have informed your perspective on life?
Where do your values and assumptions come from?
How do you express these values in your life and in your job?
What do you believe is the role of humans on earth?

2.2 Changing narratives

You don´t fear people whose story you know.
-Margaret J. Wheatley

"Why are we still at war with each other and with nature?"
(Wahl, 2016, p.28)

The shift from a mechanistic to a systemic worldview is a biggie. Our main task is to gradually let go of the destructive narrative of separation and embrace the restorative narrative of interconnection. We see this as a process in which both narratives co-exist simultaneously whilst consciously nurturing the stories of interconnection. The more attention we give to our interrelatedness, the more we experience, see and become the interbeings we are.

"What can we learn from letting go of the myth of control?"
(Wahl, 2016, p.30)

The roots of climate change, loss of species diversity, growing social inequality, massive burn-outs, increasing depression and the rise of polarisation are found in mechanistic narratives of separation, such as …

The belief that humans are separate from nature and that humans are here to conquer nature.
The belief that men and women are separate and that masculine traits are superior to feminine.
The belief that the mind is separate from nature.
The belief that the logical left brain hemisphere is separate from and superior to the intuitive right brain hemisphere.
The idea of reductionism that interprets a complex system as the sum of its parts, hereby neglecting the relational dynamics.

This shift is often described as 'From Ego to Eco' containing multiple changing narratives:

From humans as the masters of nature to humans as a participants in nature.
From the universe as a machine to the universe as a living system.
From separation to interconnectedness.
From a fixed truth, certainty and dualism to complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity.
From answering to questioning
From fitting in to belonging.
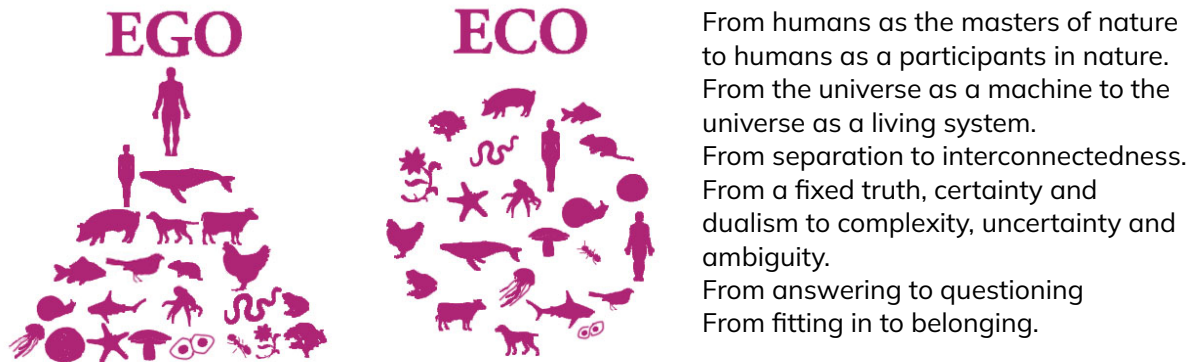
The danger in this way of presenting the paradigm shift is that it creates another dualism, this time between EGO and ECO, the old hierarchical and the new flat way, between self-care and care for the world. Daniel Christian Wahl (2020) proposes a third way: "*the healthy expression of self (ego) in service to world (eco) without seeing the two as separate, but as dynamic expressions of life as a planetary (or cosmic) process.*" We are entering the era of the and-and perspective, of authentic autonomy in interconnectedness, of self-care **and** care for the world.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	Questions for story sharing:
	What is the quality of my listening?
	How do I make the interconnectedness visible?
	How can you value feminine qualities more?
	How can you bring more of your whole self in your teaching?
	How do you deal with uncertainty and ambiguity?
	How can you respect the wisdom of the body, intuition, silence?
	How does letting go of control change the way you relate to pupils?

Link to curriculum Worldview, module 1 narrative & storytelling

2.3 Communication skills

Between what is said and not meant,
and what is meant and not said,
most of love is lost.
-Khalil Gibran

We nourish our relationships by communicating from the heart, even in conflicts. One way of learning this is by getting acquainted with Non Violent Communication (Gaia education, 2017-2018b, p.6-10), developed by M. Rosenberg. It teaches us to observe without judging, to

identify and express feelings without blaming others, to take responsibility for our feelings while acknowledging our needs, to make requests consciously and receive empathically. Another approach is Radical Honesty: expressing directly out lout what you notice in your mind, body and in front of you.

The ability to listen actively and deeply to others (Gaia education, 2017-2018b, p.11-15) is actually difficult. It requires practice and commitment. Learning to listen starts with identifying what we are feeling and judging and noticing how we react. To really listen, we need to let go of our opinions, prejudices, feelings and develop an inner silence. Active and deep listening involves many skills such as liberating our mind, suspending our opinions, appreciating differences, honouring people´s boundaries and uncovering hidden assumptions.

By suspending our opinion, we do not deny our own truth but we make space for different ideas and truths too. We start to listen deeply, we develop an inner silence and we discover hidden assumptions in ourselves and in others. When we listen with genuine curiosity, we welcome all thoughts, opinions and feelings present in the field and we let people feel heard. Five important steps in offering feedback are (Gaia education, 2017-2018b, p.16-24): share your expectations, research the facts, clarify your motives for giving feedback, consider the right timing for positive and negative feedback and be specific.

Reflection questions
How often do you express your feelings?
How do you acknowledge your needs?
How is the quality of your listening?
How specific is your feedback?
How do you share your expectations?
How do you respond to feedback?

Links to curriculum & companion Social module 1 Communication skills

3. What you teach and how you teach, addressing the needs

Getting to know yourself and the school members is necessary to engage people and reach a win-win-win situation. We need to find out what the needs and talents in our school community are in order to address these in our school activities. Most people have little time, unless they can contribute in a way that is meaningful and fulfilling to them. Can we make space in meetings and gatherings to listen to each other´s stories and hear the gifts and longings in the group?

3.1 Who am I? Getting to know myself

Deep listening, to our inner voice,
to our community, to wild nature,
can help us catch sight of the soul.
Parker J. Palmer

Knowing ourselves, helps us to make decisions, to see the wood through the trees and to focus on what really matters.
Sharing our talents and passions is essential for a fulfilling life.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4

Questions for story sharing:
What are my gifts and passions?
What do I want to learn?
What are my dreams for a better world?
What is my body and intuition telling me?
What are my values and how can I honour them more?
How can I love this world a bit more?
How can I take more care of myself?
Who are my allies? Which resources can I call upon?

Links to curriculum & companion module 2 of Worldview Who am I?

3.2 Empowerment through reconnection

The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Curiosity has its own reason for existing.
- Albert Einstein

The shift from a mechanic to a systemic worldview involves a transition from repressive power to creative power. Repressive power has its roots in a worldview based on fear and distrust. Something is either true or false, right or wrong. It keeps us stuck in the dramatic power triangle of persecutor, rescuer and victim. In order to free ourselves from these limiting roles, we need a social awareness of what others and we ourselves need to develop. An interconnected systemic worldview implies the appreciation of all truths, and of our creative power to nurture the process of life.

"Are we asking the
right questions?"
(Wahl, 2016, p.36)

Understanding the roots of our current crisis happens by recognising the psychological damage the old narrative causes. Sharing stories about fears and resistances in a non-judgemental environment helps us to look at our current culture, understand our subjective experiences and find healing ways to overcome the narrative of separation.

"What can we learn from
trusting our subjective
experiences more deeply?"
(Wahl, 2016, p.30)

By listening to the fears of our colleagues, not only do we nourish our interconnectedness and get to understand each other's needs and feelings, we also learn to respond in more welcoming ways. When we allow emotions to be expressed, without judging them and without interfering to fix them, we are opening up to the wisdom of subjective experiences.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	**Questions for story sharing:** What am I afraid of? Can I find wisdom in my fears? Where do I see stress vs. hope in the world? What stresses me? What nourishes me? What makes me angry and how does this anger serve me? When do you deny your emotions? How can you honour emotions? When do I experience the fear of losing power, my position or my privileges? When do I experience trust & connection? Am I acting out of scarcity thinking? What is my sense of being enough? What does abundance mean to me? How do I deny the importance of making mistakes in the learning process? How can I celebrate mistakes? How am I neglecting other forms of wisdom in myself and in others? How can I invite other forms of wisdom?

Links to curriculum & companion Social Dimension module 2 Empowerment

3.3 Facilitation

Give me the strength to trust the process,
grant me the love to believe in the group
-Samantha Bennett

Everybody knows how frustrating ineffective meetings can be. No one likes gatherings where arguments fill the air and where people are afraid to speak up. Facilitation is a collection of skills, tools and techniques to orchestrate meetings that help group members to create an empathic, trustful climate, to make decisions, define a common vision, plan activities, achieve their goals and resolve conflicts. Participatory facilitation gives participants a voice in the decision making, engages and empowers them. In general it aims to promote efficiency and equity.

Where the secondary teacher is often an expert in a particular subject, the facilitator is rather specialised in group dynamics, planning, team building and conflict resolution. The facilitator is the role that listens to all voices, including the voices of the minorities and even the unspoken ones. An effective facilitator has an open and empathic attitude, is agile in responding to unexpected situations and senses what the group needs. That said, a basic set of facilitation skills and techniques is critical to create a collaborative, inclusive, empathic school culture, to build community. These can also be used by teachers in the classroom, in parents meetings, or even in school events. There are many different tools for all different contexts and goals (see 'methodology'). What they all have in common is the combination of aloneness, togetherness and collaboration. Authentic autonomy in interconnectedness. Read about the need for facilitation (Wahl, 2018) here.

Link to curriculum companion Facilitator Role p. 8 link to methods

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	**Reflection questions for facilitators:** How am I being right now? Who hasn´t spoken yet? How can I invite the participation of everyone? Am I influencing the outcome? How can I be of service to the group? What is my intuition telling me about the needs of the group?

How do you create safety for yourself and others?
How can I make the meeting space more welcoming?
What is not being said?
How can I invite our multiple intelligences during our meeting?
Which facilitation method can help us to create a common vision?

3.4 Leadership

"How can we co-create the school and involve all the members in finding solutions that work for them?"
(Wahl, 2016, p.61)

The biggest misconception about leadership is that it is something we can delegate to a person at the top.
-Otto Scharmer

To stimulate the creative power of a group and silence the present repressive powers, a different kind of leadership is needed. We are looking for the kind of leadership that contributes to life affirming conditions and a thriving culture. It is essentially a distributed leadership, a shared power. Instead of power over, you develop power with others. By sharing power and responsibility we increase participation and engagement, involve the talents of all participants, nurture empowerment and get better results. And, everybody within the school community can develop these leadership skills in his or her own authentic way. A beautiful way to start practising regenerative leadership in your life is by looking at your ecosystem and its relational dynamics. Your personal ecosystemic map shows you your restorative versus unhealthy relations and it highlights your needs and opportunities to increase your wellbeing. *Which relationships are thriving or not, and how big is their impact on you?*

Exercise (Hutchins & Storm, 2019, p. 266-270):
Draw a circle in the middle of a page. That circle is YOU. Now draw circles on the right side of YOU, representing your inner relationships, and on the left side, representing your outer relationships. Connect the circles with lines if they influence each other. Thriving relationships are represented by colourful lines. The thicker the lines the more impact they have. Degenerative or unhealthy relationships are dark lines. To see how this works, look at the next chapter where the same exercise is applied to the school ecosystem.

What are the qualities of a holistic and regenerative leadership? What can we learn from bees, trees and fungi? How can we apply nature's wisdom to the organisation? What is the logic of life?

One possible resource to inspire us to be the best version of ourselves is the book *Regenerative Leadership* (Hutchins & Storm, 2019, p.86). Hutchins and Storm have summarized the key qualities, values and design skills of regenerative leadership as follows:

Living Systems Being
- Presence
- Coherence
- Patience
- Silence
- Abundance
- Dance in the moment

Living Systems Culture (value embodiment)
- Survival & thrival
- Mission & movement
- Developmental & respectful
- Diversity & inclusion
- Self-organising & locally-attuning
- Eco-systemic transformation & dialogue

Living Systems Design
- Waste equals food
- Clever shapes & forms
- Regenerative materials
- <u>Biophilic design</u>
- Ecosystemic design thinking

The being skills enhance your self-confidence, emotional intelligence and capacity to respond to change. The cultural values help to increase relational skills, motivate people, reach goals and define a common vision. The design skills create ecological awareness and appropriate structures.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	**Questions for story sharing:** How calm and attentive are we? How aligned am I with my authentic self? How comfortable am I with not knowing how things will unfold? How do I create space for silence? When do you feel abundance and trust? How are we following the rhythm of the season? What is the bigger mission of the school? How do you value and include diverse perspectives and backgrounds? How does the organisation contribute to life-affirming futures? How is the wellbeing of the school members? How transparent are we being with each other? How much autonomy and responsibility do teachers and pupils have?

4. Creating a common vision

*A team is not a group of people
who work together. A team is a group
of people who trust each other*
-Simon Sinek

4.1 Organisational Ecosystemic Mapping

Ecosystemic Mapping is created by Laura Storm and Giles Hutchins and is outlined extensively in their book 'Regenerative Leadership' (Hutchins & Storm, 2019, p.258-266) . The tool gives you an overview of the organisational ecosystem and its relational dynamics. It shows you the relations that regenerate or degenerate the school health and highlights urgent needs and potential opportunities to increase the general wellbeing. You can either increase the impact of existing thriving relationships or heal the degenerative relationships. *Which relationships are thriving or*

not, and how big is their impact? The same exercise can be done to map your personal relationships.

Exercise
Draw a circle in the middle of a page. This central circle is your organisation or school.
Make some circles on the right side and write the inner relationships in each of them. Do the same on the left side for the outer stakeholder relationships.
Connect the circles by lines when they are related. Thriving relationships are represented by colourful lines. The thicker the lines the more impact they have. Degenerative or unhealthy relationships are dark lines.
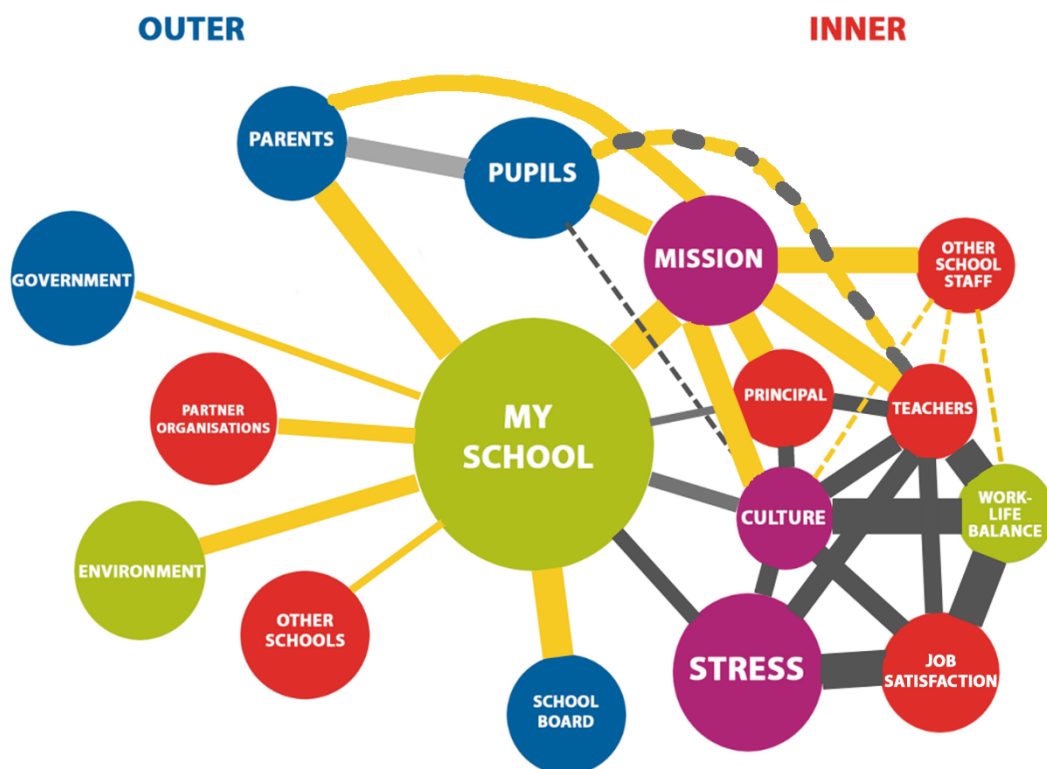
In this case (see figure), the school would benefit from creating a better work-life balance & reducing the stress levels. An ecosystemic map helps you to envision your sustainable school project around present needs. Based on the peculiarities of its organisational map, a school can then decide to choose for:

- Project education
- Volunteering
- Creating activities to turn the school into a meeting-point.
- Stimulating parental involvement through informal contacts & participatory gatherings.
- Building partnerships with other schools for after school child-care
- Connecting to neighbours and local businesses to intensify real life learning
- Working on place based challenges
- …

4.2 Vision, mission, goals

Another possible way to increase the group cohesion happens by actively working on a common vision (Gaia education, 2017-2018h, p. 16-21) and review it from time to time. Visions guide us on our way and help us to go in the right direction. A vision shouldn´t be fixed and exact. It may change and evolve over the years. Creating a vision should also not be limited by current obstacles. The initial vision needs to be idealistic, imaginative, intuitive yet clearly described and envisioned. Donella Meadows described the importance of a vision in 1994 at the International Society of Ecological Economics Conference in Costa Rica. Listen to her speech (Meadows, 2008) here.

Cocreating a common vision is a step by step process that starts with the vision of each individual, and gradually moves from little to bigger groups, and eventually to the whole group. Participants can draw, use words, poems or even songs to express their dream. Participants tell their future story to each other and tell what they like about each other´s vision. In each group the common elements will be gathered in a new vision while the discrepancies will be discussed to find possible ways to address them.

A clear, simple and inspiring **vision** (Gaia education, 2017-2018a, p. 15-19) is the shared future you want to create and defines the 'who', the 'what' and the 'why' of your project. Once a common vision has been formulated together, we can move backwards from the vision to the present and move step by step towards the vision. This process is called backcasting. *How might we get there from here?* The **mission** or purpose expresses what you will by doing and experiencing to manifest your vision. The **goals** are the measurable objectives you commit yourself to in a determined term.

For most teachers and staff when they arrive at a new school, the vision is often already pre-formed. Even in that case, it is still important to have both visions clear, your own and that of the school, to identify where they match and in which ways you can be true to the school´s vision, mission, goals ánd to your own.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	Reflection questions
	Do you feel good about your own written vision?
	Does your own vision inspire you?
	Does your vision reveal your values and can you 'own' it?
	What is your first step towards your personal vision?
	Is the vision of your organisation simple, clean and authentic?
	Does the group´s vision focus on the who, the why and the what?
	Is the organisation´s vision exciting? Is it inspiring? Is it clear?
	What is your first step towards the school´s vision?
	Is the school´s vision statement unrealistic or too ambitious?

Link to Curriculum Companion 3.1. Developing a sustainability vision p.13 + Link to method

4.3 Privilege, Power & Value Systems

When working together to realise a project, the ideal situation would be to experience autonomy in interconnectedness, where we each grow individually and are able to synergise our unique

talents. In order to reach this synergy and bring out the best in one another, we need to be curious about each other's needs, gifts and dreams.

As our culture of separation hasn´t prepared us to embrace diversity, abundance and vitality, we can start by recognising the privileges and oppressions our community members experience in this society (Gaia education, 2017-2018a, p.22-25). These privileges and oppressions are related to the social identities you belong to such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, class, age and ability. Each category has a privileged group and oppressed groups. For example, in the gender category males belong to the privileged group, females and transgenders to the oppressed groups.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4	Questions to reflect upon alone and together: Which of your social group identities are you most aware of? Why? Which of your social group identities are you least aware of? Why? How do you benefit from belonging to a certain social group? Which disadvantages do you experience due to belonging to a less privileged group? How can you create awareness around the unearned privileges present in your community? Who are you without your roles and titles?

In the process of working towards a common vision, conflicts and misunderstandings might arise due to conflicting value systems. One valuable resource to reveal and take into account the value systems present in a school community can be found in the two school development tools Silke Weiss developed.

==Link to Curriculum modules 3 social dimension: Building Community, Embracing Diversity==
==Link to Curriculum modules 3 of Worldview: Widening Circles of health==

4.4 It takes a village to raise a child

The education of the next generation is a shared responsibility of all (school) community members: teachers, principals, pupils, parents, families, government, administrators, communities, partner organisations, mentors, etcetera. Education leaders such as principals, agencies, and administrators have an important supporting role to fill, yet cultures are designed and cultivated in day to day life, starting in the home.

Guiding questions:
- Participatory policy: How can we respect all the voices? Who really needs to be involved in the decision-making? Which decision-making process is most beneficial for this situation? How do we ensure everybody gets informed?
- Transparent, inclusive, appreciative communication: How can we engage the different stakeholders? How transparent are we about our goals and intentions? How do we express appreciation?
- Experimentation and professionalisation: How much time and budget is there?

==Link to Methodology> Decision-making==

5. Knowledge sharing between schools and stakeholders

If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.
-African Proverb

5.1 Personal Support Networks

You are not alone. All over the world teachers and schools are changing education from the inside out. If a lot of small people, in a lot of small places, do a lot of small things, they can change the face of the world. It is a lot easier though, when you are supported by people with similar intentions. Sharing experiences, insights, failures and successes will accelerate, deepen and motivate the learning process. Think about building support groups for teachers or principals, or cross-sectoral teams of empowered change makers, to share stories and reflect on the challenges teachers, youngsters and principals face when integrating sustainability at school.

Existing support groups:
- Teachers for Future (https://teacherssforfuture.org)
- Parents for Future (https://parentsforfuture.org)
- Deep Adaptation Forum Educators and/or Parenting (https://deepadaptation.ning.com)
- Regen Collective. A Community of Practice for the Regeneration of Education and Learning (https://regen-collectives.mn.co)

5.2 Mapping your project´s network

When starting a project, understanding the web of human connections (Gaia education, 2017-2018d, p.16-17) can show you opportunities you weren't aware of. Who are the supporters of your education project and who are the potential adversaries? Who are the school´s neighbours and surrounding organisations? What are their goals and interests, needs and dreams? With whom can you work directly? Who do you hope to influence? How can you include supporters and adversaries in your project?

Mapping your network makes your relationships and possible strategies visible. Other useful questions to map your connections are: Who are the experts in the region? Who are the informal leaders or community builders? Where are the innovators? Who has connections with funding agencies? Who would be interested? Is there enough diversity in our network?

5.3 Language as an 'activist' communication tool

My language is my home.
-Wittgenstein

The way we connect to people matters. The language we speak can help us to deepen connections. The metaphors and words we use, also shape the way we think and act. They can either regenerate or degenerate our relationships. *How can we build a vocabulary that highlights interconnectedness, life and living beings?*

6. Alignment with the history, identity and context of the school

6.1 Local rootedness in the land, traditions, art and celebration

Earth care, People care, Fair share -David Homgren

Belonging is a basic human need and differs from fitting in. To belong is to be seen, heard, supported and successful within a group. Fitting in shows that we hide, change or ignore parts of ourselves. When we belong, our whole being feels safe enough to open up, to be authentic within a community and to fail without being hurt. A sense of belonging is not only increased by good relationships with our fellow school mates. It also gets strengthened by feeling rooted in the neighbourhood, the land, its history, its ceremonies and festivities. Knowledge of the place and appropriate participation in its activities enables us to develop a deeper relationship with the natural world and its inhabitants. Through art we can add depth to our experiences and celebrate life.

How can you develop your sensibility for the bioregion? Learning about the natural and human history of the area around your school, increases your awareness of the land. Interviewing elders of the neighbourhood about how it was before, gives you a lively idea of how the landscape changed throughout time. What are the features and patterns of the landscape? Where are the water cycles? What does the place need? Is there a park that can be cleaned up? Are there neighbours in need of your help? Which traditions are local and what is their history? Can we use art to dress the ceremonies or to express gratitude? What dishes can we make with local food? These are but some of the ways to intensify your relationship to the land.

Facilitation suggestions on p.4

Questions for story sharing:
How do we celebrate what we have accomplished together?
How have you made the world a more beautiful place?
What are you grateful for?

6.2. Connection to Nature

*And forget not that the earth delights
to feel your bare feet and the winds
long to play with your hair.*
-Khalil Gibran

Connecting to nature (Gaia education, 2017-2018f) goes far beyond cognitively investigating the landscape´s characteristics. Developing a relationship with other living beings requires empathy. Deep listening to nature is similar to deeply listening to self and others. It carries the qualities of an open mind, an inner silence, and the ability to be in wonderment, to be amazed. It also helps to reduce stress and eco-anxiety. What happens when we look at the world through the eyes and

ears of a squirrel? What do we learn from seeing, being and moving like a weeping willow? Being in wild nature awakens our wild nature, our natural self. Even when there is no access to outdoor spaces we can bring in nature. We can decorate the classroom and meeting spaces with leaves, stones and flowers and rouse nature awareness.

Questions for story sharing:
Which stories about fauna and flora are present in the area?
What did you learn from a special encounter you once had with a wild animal?
How would the trees respond to your question or challenge?
Link to 'methods' for nature reconnection tools'

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